

PEOPLE & THINGS

GLYNDEBOURNE Opera has always seemed, if not too good to be true, at any rate too good to last. Perfection, after all, is the greatest of luxuries. The pursuit of this particular form of perfection is well known to be ruinous. Every summer, therefore, eyes were turned in friendly anxiety towards Glyndebourne and its great-hearted *genius loci*, Mr. John Christie; nor is it a secret that there have been times, since the war, when the continuance of Glyndebourne was made possible only by benefactions from industry and commerce.

I was, therefore, particularly glad to learn that negotiations are far advanced for the establishment of Glyndebourne as a charitable trust, by which Mr. Christie and his heirs will continue to exert a controlling artistic influence, while the work of the opera company goes forward in conditions approximating to financial security. It is this which has made possible, for instance, the preparation of an elaborate Mozart bi-centenary season for 1956. I believe, too, it may be possible for Glyndebourne to appear in foreign countries; and one of the other plans which may now come to fruition is that of an annual Easter festival at Glyndebourne, with "Parsifal" as its centre-piece.

Geographers

FEW buildings in London are more deceptive than the headquarters of the Royal Geographical Society in Kensington Gore. From the outside, it suggests a boat-house or Edwardian shooting-lodge. Within, all is grave, austere, discreetly strenuous. General Gordon's battered saddle puts the visitor to shame, and the only concession to human frailty is the Valentine sent by Livingstone to Miss Littler.

The maps which line the walls detail the great nineteenth-century journeys which the R.G.S. was the first to sponsor. None of these, however, is more comprehensive than the network of missions now being fulfilled by members of Sir John Hunt's Everest expedition. In common with many other admirers of this gallant company, I have often wondered to what use the Society would put the income which it will derive, not only from these hundreds of lectures, but from Sir John Hunt's book, and from the film which the United States has just rated one of the "best ten" of 1953.

After Everest

THE Society's director, Mr. L. P. Kirwan, combines a frame of Punjabi teak with the utterance of a bass clarinet. Having detected within me the instincts of a mere tourist, he was at pains to stress the primarily scientific character of the Society's work. The Everest Trust Fund for exploration and research in mountainous regions is still in its earliest stage; but when it is used, for instance, to help Sir Edmund Hillary's New Zealand expedition to Nepal, the party will include four qualified surveyors, and due attention will be paid to those aspects of botany in which Nepal is immoderately rich.

In these days, the glaciologist, the geologist, the geographer, and the social anthropologist join hands, with a figure whom Livingstone might not have expected; the pure economist, whose help with, for instance, the problems of African land tenure and labour migration is indispensable. Despite this emphasis upon the practical uses of exploration, the R.G.S. retains its old sympathy for the individual

By ATTICUS



Mr. John Christie, C.H.

It is still, in fact, a place in which anyone with a serious and original idea may be assured of serious and informed consideration.

John in 3-D

SINCE Mr. Augustus John first divulged, in *THE SUNDAY TIMES*, that he had taken to the practice of sculpture, many readers have written to ask when these sculptures will be on view. I understand from Mr. John that his retrospective exhibition at Burlington House, which is due to open on March 1, will contain at least half a dozen of them. Mr. John is the most exacting of artists; and those who, when greeted with the words "Like to be bustled?", at once returned an unhesitating "Yes," have found the process to be as lengthy as it is exhilarating.

I believe that the exhibition, which is to occupy the whole of the Diploma Gallery, will also include one of the large decorations to which Mr. John has given a great part of his time in recent years.

Maugham Succession

IT would not have been entirely irrelevant if, in the tributes paid to Mr. Somerset Maugham on his eightieth birthday, it had been pointed out that there is no danger of the Maugham family being lost to writing for a long time to come. The four children of his brother, the former Lord Chancellor, are guarantors of that.

Robin Maugham has several successful books to his credit. His sisters are less easily recognised, for they write under their married names. Kate Bruce is the author of several amusing novels. Diana Marr-Johnson has written at least one good play and has done a considerable amount of journalism. Honor Earl has written, with unusual authority, on women's prisons, in the intervals between painting portraits of the famous. These remarkable sisters are all intensely and strenuously interested in social work, in its widest sense, and not without encouragement from their famous relative.

Bookseller

IT is sixty-five years, this coming week, since Mr. John G. Wilson, C.B.E., first entered the bookselling business. "And haven't I enjoyed it!" he said to me, as we huddled over the fire in the rigorous little cupboard which he has allocated to himself in the firm of J. and E. Bumpus, of which he is managing

director. Mr. Maugham had just been in, like many another famous writer of the last fifty years, to see "Wilson of Bumpus's"; for Mr. Wilson's office is the last of the London coffee-houses; and he may generally be found there discussing in the most melodious of Scottish accents upon the vagaries of literary reputation.

I was fascinated, for instance, to learn that the three books which have sold most solidly and consistently since Mr. Wilson first went to work at four shillings a week are the Bible, the Works of Shakespeare—and "Three Men in a Boat." I fancy that few men, in a quiet way, have done more than he to direct the taste of the general reader towards the unalterable summits of great literature. "The joy of it!" he said to me. "To see their faces when they come back—that's what's such fun!"

No longer can he offer the series of his youth—the threepenny Universal Library, the ninepenny Camelot Classics, and David Nutt's Tudor Translations—but I found him generous in praise, for instance, of Dr. Rieu's Penguin classics, and emphatic in his advice to buyers and sellers alike; "Never get fixed in your tastes," he admonished me. "Never get set!"

Cornishmen

NOTHING could be more appropriate than the despatch of the 1st Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to relieve the Royal Welch Fusiliers in Jamaica and British Honduras; for few regiments, I imagine, can have so long and close an association with the West Indies.

I cannot help hoping, however, that the present battalion's sojourn will not be as eventful as those endured by some of its predecessors. Between shipwreck, famine, yellow fever, and death by apoplexy from sunstroke, few hazards of foreign service would seem to have been spared the D.C.L.I. It was, however, in action against the French that the regiment especially distinguished itself; the Officers' Mess table-silver, known as the Dominica plate, was presented to the regiment by the Government of Dominica after one conspicuously gallant engagement. The despatch of this distinguished regiment must, in fact, be construed as a stroke of imagination on the part of someone at the War Office; and it is a stroke which will be particularly acceptable, I imagine, to the present Governor of Jamaica, Sir Hugh Foot, who is himself a notable son of Cornwall.

Sun and Snow

LAST week's severe weather, which apart from much other damage partly upset yesterday's Rugby programme, at least satisfied the curiosity of some members of the New Zealand party.

Few of them, I am told, had ever seen snow, and they were disappointed that they did not get a glimpse of it during their Scottish tour. It was strange that they should see it first at Eastbourne where, soon after their arrival in this country, they spent many days training in brilliant summer weather.

At the dinner which followed yesterday's match, and to which I referred last week, the six original members of the England team which played the All Blacks in 1905 had a pleasant surprise awaiting them. A seventh member, Harry Shewring, who played at centre three-quarter, wrote to me, and a word with the organisers resulted in an invitation to the celebrator being hastily sent to him.